

Strange things happen when you pray!

Some years ago, before we were married, Gill and I were bumping along a dusty road in rural Kenya, on our way to visit a friend of ours called Gilbert, who was at theological college studying for ordination. The kindly bishop who had taken pity on us, and given us a lift, took us to his home where we stopped to eat some fresh pineapple, while he sought another lift to take us to Gilbert's college. Suddenly, to our surprise, Gilbert himself arrived at the house to greet us, accompanied by Pam Wilding, a priest from the diocese of Blackburn.

I had never met Pam before, but I immediately recognised her name from the Blackburn diocesan prayer diary. Pam was one of the missionary links at the back of the prayer diary whom we prayed for each month. In all the years of praying for Pam I never imagined that I would one day meet her face-to-face, or that I would be so glad when I did.

Not only did she drive us safely (not something you ever take for granted in Africa!) to the college, but she also took Gill into her home while we were visiting Gilbert's rather spartan college.

Now having returned to Blackburn diocese, it has been a joy to start using the diocesan prayer diary again. Praying by name for a different parish in the diocese each day, and for our links with The Free State and Braunschweig, reminds me each morning of my place within the worldwide Body of Christ, and the knowledge that others are praying for me is a source of strength, especially on those tough, lonely days when the spiritual battle seems very real. 'If one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.' (1 Cor. 12: 26).

If you haven't discovered *Blackburn Prayers* yet, it can be downloaded free each month from the diocesan website www.blackburn.anglican.org and click on 'Faith and Worship' then 'Blackburn Prayers'. Or you can have them emailed direct to you, by contacting karen.ashcroft@blackburn.anglican.org

This is a wonderful tool which we can all use to support one another within the family of the diocese. Prayer changes things. And who knows, one day you could be stuck in a difficult situation when someone you have been praying for suddenly comes to your aid!

Mark Ireland, Archdeacon of Blackburn